

The big move

• DR. BATYA L. LUDMAN

My dearest children,
As we're starting to settle into our new home, Abba and I thought we'd share some advice with you. Three years ago we set out to do you a favor. Watching as you each left home, we knew that as difficult as it would be, for all of us, it made sense for us to begin to think about downsizing – a wonderful reason to move. Until now, having my office in the house allowed me the freedom to mommy you by being so close by. Many days I was sure that you didn't even know that I worked "outside the home" as you felt my presence.

Now you've all grown up and left home, each having made major moves in the past year, growing in space for little ones or all your possessions. Simultaneously, we started reducing ours with the goal of simplifying our lives, and God willing, someday very far away making life easier for you. Like good scouts we wanted to make our footprint small enough that cleaning out our clutter would not be an overwhelming responsibility, as we had experienced with our parents. We've helped you in this enormous task but sadly still left you with more work than we would have liked, both now and in the future.

All the while, our more immediate goal was to create a warm, calm, loving and functional space for you and your children to return to in our new home. We know that it can't be easy to say goodbye to the past, to the home you grew up in, to your neighborhood and to all that was familiar, and so loved. We've tortured you as you've learned to exchange treasured possessions for comforting memories. At times you weren't very happy as we reminded you that if you valued something, you would have to keep it, not us!

All the while, our more immediate goal was to create a warm, calm, loving and functional space for you and your children to return to in our new home

Moving is never easy, especially when downsizing. Physically, it's hard work to make the usable space smaller and yet keep it functional. Emotionally, it involves bringing elements of your past, present and future together while acknowledging that you're moving on in life and actually aging, as stairs become your enemy. Your priorities change and while at times scary, it can be quite comforting. It's also a process of letting go and acknowledging that you won't have all the material things you might have once wanted, and recognizing that that is okay. You can't take it with you at the end of the day. Aspects of any move can be very stressful, whether you're going into an assisted-living situation where everything is provided, or making choices as to what tile color you'd like. As a psychologist, I've seen that even a seemingly small renovation challenges the fragile equilibrium and has one questioning what on earth they've done and why, as dust collects everywhere, landing them in my office feeling completely overwhelmed.

You watched us turn down over 50 places before we found the apartment that we would finally call home. You thought at various times your parents were insane – we saw the looks on your faces and we think you were shocked when we finally said "yes." You would have settled on something far sooner.

So dear children, here are a few lessons, far broader in scope than the move itself, that we have learned along the way. We hope they will help you some day.

1. Moving, and other transitions, are never easy. Whether planned or unplanned, for good or for bad reasons, no matter how prepared you think you are, change is scary, perhaps exciting and definitely unpredictable. See these challenges as opportunities for reexamining your priorities as well as a time of real growth. Find the positives and aspects that you enjoy and embrace them. And plan as much as you can.

2. You will need to learn to settle. You won't get everything you want in one place, for the price that you want. That's life. Learn to make it work and appreciate what you do have, not be upset over what you don't. Never be envious of others. Lighten your load

and feel freer by recognizing that relationships and shared experiences are what bring you meaning and happiness and not the stuff you collect. Ask yourself if you really need it. The answer is probably no.

3. You'll come across many different people, whether in preparation for changing dwellings, or in life in general. Some are amazingly kind and decent, others are simply dishonest and unpleasant. Recognize that there are good people and those whose behavior leaves much to be desired. Learn from both but keep your cool. Nothing is worth getting angry about. Always be a mensch. The people that you least expect will surprise you in the nicest of ways.

4. Look after your health at all times. Nothing has to be done that very moment. Stop, and get help if you need it. Your back is more valuable than your wallet, and so while you may need to compromise, don't ever compromise on your health.

5. Remember, good friends are always there to help you – whether it is to listen or feed you, to advise you or to lean on physically. They want to be there for you. Let them help. You can learn from the experience of others.

6. Look after your sanity. Be kind to yourself and be proud of each accomplishment. Nothing is worth losing sleep over or years off your life. Nourish a calm mind. Find your sense of peace and "go there."

7. A friend told me for her move she hired both packers and unpackers. It seemed unthinkable for us at first. However, the more I thought about my limited time, the more I realized this was a necessity, not a luxury, for those with busy lives and no extra time. Seeing how someone else made organization out of our chaos was a true lesson. Everything has a home, and we do too!

As with everything in life, you only regret what you don't do, not what you do do. If you're debating making a move, don't be frightened or allow yourself to be overwhelmed. Take it piece by piece, step by step, room by room and "just do it." We are so incredibly happy with our decision, and know that you are, too.

We love you tons.
Ima and Abba

The writer is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Ra'anana, and author of the book Life's Journey: Exploring Relationships – Resolving Conflicts. She has written about psychology in The Jerusalem Post since 2000. ludman@netvision.net.il; www.drbatyaludman.com



MOVING IS 'also a process of letting go and acknowledging that you won't have all the material things you might have once wanted – and recognizing that that is okay.' (TNS)